

# Inspection Connection

Seafood Inspection Program • U.S. Department of Commerce/NOAA

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## Overwhelming support for Seafood Inspection Program transfer to USDA

by Richard Cano

During September-November 2003, the Seafood Inspection Program held meetings around the country with Program participants, Inspection staff, trade associations, and consumer organizations to obtain their views regarding the best location for the Program within the Federal Government. These meetings occurred in the following areas: Washington, DC; Fairhaven, MA; Gloucester, MA; Hampton, VA; Chicago, IL; Miami, FL; Tampa, FL, Biloxi, MS; Los Angeles, CA; Long Beach, CA; and Seattle, WA.



Five options were discussed: 1) Status quo – remaining in NMFS; 2) remaining in USDC, but not NMFS/NOAA (e.g., International Trade); 3) transfer to FDA; 4) transfer to USDA, Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS); and 5) transfer to USDA, Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS). The overwhelming conclusion of all these groups was that the Seafood Inspection Program should be located in USDA/AMS.

Meetings have been held between officials in NOAA and USDA, including a meeting between VADM Lautenbacher (Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere) and Mr. William T. Hawks (USDA Under Secretary for Marketing and Regulatory Programs). Both Departments support the transfer of the Seafood Inspection Program to better consolidate inspection functions within the Federal Government to the benefit of industry and consumers. The next step for the agencies is to brief the Congressional committees in the House and the Senate having jurisdiction in this issue.

## FDA Proposes Better Integration of Seafood Inspection Program with FDA's Inspection Authorities

by Richard Cano

Dr. Mark McClellan, Commissioner of FDA, proposed in a letter dated January 7, 2004 to VADM Lautenbacher (Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere) that a joint working group be formed to identify and implement precise goals for a better integration of the Seafood Inspection Program with FDA's seafood inspection authorities. The Commissioner provided several examples of areas for such integration: 1) certification of seafood exports that FDA "now provides at considerable expense"; 2) commissioning NMFS inspectors "which would help FDA in meeting its public health responsibilities"; and 3) "the use of NOAA laboratory capacity to carry out analyses of seafood samples that FDA collects during the normal course of its work, or during 'crisis' situations".

In VADM Lautenbacher's response, he fully supported the Commissioner's proposals for better integrating the Seafood Inspection Program with FDA's authorities. The response also addressed the intended transfer of the Program to USDA/AMS and stated that the Commissioner's proposals should be pursued regardless of whether the Program remains in NOAA or is eventually transferred to USDA.

The first meeting of the joint working group was scheduled for March 10, 2004 to initiate the process.



## Customer Service

by Monty Berg

Greetings from the Customer Service section of the Seafood Inspection Program and best wishes for the coming year. This year presents us with many questions and challenges.

We've seen a series of issues that have developed over fair trade with more possibly on the horizon. One could ask, "What created these issues and what can we do about them?" I don't think any of us know for sure and there are probably many different components to the answer. But there is one thing that has been largely overlooked by our industry and the people marketing domestically produced products: U.S. Grade A.

The one factor that domestic producers have at their disposal, not available to foreign finished products, is the U.S. Grade A mark. I've heard numerous people in industry say, "We don't market Grade A because our customers don't call for it." Others have been quite forthright and said they discourage the use of U.S. Grade A and listed many reasons, such as the cost of inspection, the cost of meeting the standard and others.

It can no longer be claimed that imported products are of inferior quality and don't utilize the marketing advantages reserved solely for domestic products.

What customer wouldn't want to offer their buyers products that are the best in flavor, workmanship, and labeling? The use of the Grade A mark also means that the product was processed in a sanitarily approved facility by the U.S. Department of Commerce.

Call us at (800) 422-2750 or (727) 570-5744 for a consultation.

## QUESTION CORNER

**Q** If the USDC inspects a product or facility does this mean FDA won't inspect as well?

**A** No, as the regulatory authority FDA may choose to perform an inspection. However, both FDA and States do take into account participation in the USDC Seafood Inspection Program when scheduling inspection of their limited resources.

(Questions for the Inspection Connection may be mailed to Kimberly Young, USDC/NOAA/Seafood Inspection Program, 1315 East-West Highway, Room 10860, Silver Spring, MD 20910 or e-mailed via our web page at [seafood.nmfs.noaa.gov](http://seafood.nmfs.noaa.gov))

## DSCP Quality Audits

by Brian Lynch

Inspection personnel from the Seafood Inspection Program (SIP) continue to participate in the performance of seafood quality audits for the Defense Supply Center Philadelphia (DSCP). The seafood portion of this audit function began in April, 1999.

Processed fishery products are sourced by DSCP through a network of "Prime Vendors" and distributed to military installations worldwide. DSCP will periodically visit their Prime Vendor locations to determine if perishable products are being delivered within acceptable quality and economic integrity levels.

SIP personnel work jointly with USDA/AMS inspectors, utilizing a "Food Team" approach to inspect four food commodity groups: seafood, red meats, poultry and fruits/vegetables. Each commodity expert leads the review on his/her commodity while the other team members assist with sample preparation and recording data.

DSCP has recently added to the number of audits performed per fiscal year. An average of 20-24 audits are scheduled to be completed per year and there is discussion that this number may raise to 30-36 per annum.

Each inspection region has contributed staff and other resources toward performing this audit function. This has enabled the flexibility to adequately staff these audits at some cost savings to the government. SIP auditors have traveled to a majority of the Prime Vendor locations in the United States, as well as several international locations, including: Germany, Italy, Korea, Japan. More are planned for Guam and other European locations.

This audit function has not only served to establish conformance with DSCP specifications but it has had an added educational benefit. Most attendees (buyers, salespersons, processors, contracting officers and end-users) have come away with a greater understanding of each commodity from harvest through consumption.



## TRAWLING THE NET

Looking to purchase fresh Virginia seafood? Visit [www.virginiaseafood.org](http://www.virginiaseafood.org)

Need a website for food safety. Go to [www.foodsafety.gov](http://www.foodsafety.gov)



## Electronic Payment Option

by Rita Creitz

By Summer 2004, the Seafood Inspection Program will offer an on-line electronic payment option to Program participants. This free option, sponsored by the U.S. Department of the Treasury, will allow those enrolled to receive email notification of the latest bill and to pay the bill electronically with a credit card or wire transfer.

The Inspection Program's on-line payment option will enhance, but not replace, our current method of issuing bills to our customers. We will continue to mail inspection bills the "good old-fashioned" way.

Program participants will receive more information about availability and enrollment when U.S. Treasury completes testing the application this spring.

## EU Membership Will Increase May 1, 2004

by Kenneth Aadsen

Certificate models will continue to change in the coming months as ten countries of Europe will become Members of the European Union on May 1, 2004, joining the current 15 Members. The countries are Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia, and Slovenia. USDC will prepare the bilingual certificates for each when the language models are received from the European Union. As with the present Member States, the rules of the MS will apply to imported US exports until the US becomes an approved third country.

## Third-Party Audit Activities

by Steve Wilson

Seafood Inspection Program auditors will perform third party verification audits upon request. The audits may be of domestic or foreign facilities, and the scope may range from the facility hygienic state, product evaluations, specific processes, or full system verifications. Audit standards may include the regulatory requirements of the competent authority, international standards, or specifications of the buyer. Foreign processors that receive full system audits may be placed upon the USDC Participants List of Approved International Facilities. These activities have increased dramatically in the last year.

Currently, the Program now audits approximately forty firms outside of the United States. Although most work continues to encompass tuna activities, specifically activities related to filtered smoke treated products, audits now are provided on a regular basis for other seafood products including pasteurized and canned crabmeat, frozen cephalopods, frozen snapper, and cooked shrimp products. Our work domestically has increased as well with our cooperation with the USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service in the auditing of suppliers to SYSCO, Inc. More domestic and international third party activities are on the horizon.

With the increase in biosecurity concerns of the USFDA, the importer, and the consumer, the Program has also begun evaluating these firms for meeting the USFDA's Food Security Preventive Measures Guidance and is including this information in the audit report. The Program is also increasing its use of recognized international standards in the performance of their work. Auditors are already well-versed in the audit standard of ISO 19011 and routinely use it in the performance of their audits. In addition, the draft ISO 22000 standard on food safety management systems is due out soon and when ready will be incorporated into the Program as the current ISO 9001 standard is currently.

Inquires for third-party evaluations should be directed to Steven Wilson, Chief Quality Officer at [Steven.Wilson@noaa.gov](mailto:Steven.Wilson@noaa.gov).



## Technical Services Update

**USDC's Technical Services Unit - The USDC's Technical Services Unit includes Analytical Laboratory Services (ALS), the Sensory Science Section (SSS), the National Training Section (NTS) and the Document Approval and Supply Services (DASS).** Together, the Technical Services Unit provides analytical, training, consultative and label review services to program participants and seafood industry members at-large.

### **Analytical Laboratory Services (ALS) - New! Now Available for the Seafood Industry**

Established in 2000, the ALS conducts microbiological and chemical analyses to verify the effectiveness of the Seafood Inspection Program and its participants. It now offers these same analyses on a fee basis to seafood companies interested in having their raw materials and/or finished products analyzed. The test results can be part of a company's on-going verification strategy to validate the effectiveness of process controls and the adherence to regulatory requirements, tolerances, and guidelines. For recommended number of samples to be submitted for analyses, discount prices (combination of analyses or multiple sample submission), and additional information, please call ALS at (978) 281-9386 or send an E-mail to [Jane.E.Fox-Dobson@noaa.gov](mailto:Jane.E.Fox-Dobson@noaa.gov).

### **Sensory Science Section - Science-based Sensory Quality Evaluation Training**

In addition to its role in ensuring the harmonization of seafood inspection personnel in accordance with Free Trade Agreements, the staff of the Sensory Science Section oversees the continued standardization and harmonization process of the SIP field inspection staff. Workshops are held in four geographic areas each year.

### **Sensory Science Training for the Seafood Industry**

The Sensory Science Section has an active industry component offering on-site, customized workshops for companies and trade groups. For 2004, the Branch has eleven courses both nationally and internationally and is co-sponsoring the March 17-18 Sensory Science Workshop with the National Fisheries Institute. Periodically, open enrollment sensory science courses are held as well. The Sensory Science Branch has seen an increase in the number of custom courses it offers internationally this year. "The post-Boston Seafood Show sensory session we co-sponsor with the National Fisheries Institute has grown over the last several years," says Carol Kelly, chief of the Sensory Science Branch. "We are excited about the positive response we've received about this and the number of other workshops we are holding this year. It portends to be a very busy year for our staff!" To learn more about this year's Sensory training schedule, please check our website [seafood.nmfs.noaa.gov](http://seafood.nmfs.noaa.gov) in the Training Section for updates on open enrollment. Or, contact the Sensory Section by phone at (978) 281-9123 or by email at [Michael.Diliberti@noaa.gov](mailto:Michael.Diliberti@noaa.gov).

### **National Training Section - Seafood Inspection Program - Field Training Support**

The Training Section coordinates the training and education activities which support the standardization of the SIP field staff and harmonization with other regulatory agencies. In January 2003, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) launched a comprehensive web-based training initiative to provide standardized training to inspection personnel at the state and federal level. Under the auspices of the working agreement between the two agencies, the FDA provided the USDC Inspection Staff access to its newly developed inspection related web-based training courses offered through FDA's on-line university, Office of Regulatory Affairs University (ORAU). USDC's field staff has completed approximately 75% of current year food and law training requisites. USDC plans that its field staff will complete over thirty-five additional FDA courses in 2004 to meet our organizational objective of promoting ongoing equivalency training activities.

### **Training for the Seafood Industry - HACCP Workshops Scheduled Throughout the Year**

The National Training Section has an active industry training component and offers a number of HACCP workshops for the seafood industry on a monthly basis throughout the country. The fee is \$445 or \$415 for two or more from the same company and includes all course materials and the USDC HACCP Examination. Individuals can either attend of the USDC's Open Enrollment Workshops scheduled throughout the U.S., or can organize an On-Site Workshop for up to twenty people. On-site Workshops can also be customized to address and incorporate a product group unique to



the company or trade group. On-site Workshop fees range from \$4500-\$4950 plus travel expenses. International courses are also offered. The training section now offers these courses in both English and Spanish.

**HACCP Workshop for the Seafood Industry in Spanish**

The USDC will offer four HACCP workshops in Spanish this year and will expand the training schedule to accommodate demand during 2005. There are three upcoming HACCP Workshops in Spanish which will be held March 30-April 1, in Los Angeles, CA; April 13-15 in Miami, FL; and May 18-20 in Brownsville, TX.

USDC HACCP Workshop participation and completion fulfills the training requirements outlined in Part 123.10 of the FDA Seafood HACCP Regulation and program requirements outlined in USDC's voluntary HACCP Quality Management Program.

"During the last year and a half, the National Training Section has been able to augment its staff with two exceptional Training Instructor/Consumer Safety Officers who combine excellent HACCP training skills and their practical in-plant and auditing experience," says section Chief, Karla Ruzicka. "With the added staff support, we're able to offer a greater number of courses in both Spanish and English to accommodate the needs of the industry."

For more information about this and other workshops, please contact the training section by phone at (978) 281-9269 or by email at [Karla.Ruzicka@noaa.gov](mailto:Karla.Ruzicka@noaa.gov) or view the schedule on the Web at [seafood.noaa.nmfs.gov](http://seafood.noaa.nmfs.gov) under the Training Section button.

**Document Approval and Supply Services (DASS)**

DASS reviews/approves all labels and specifications that bear USDC Inspection Marks or that are advertised as USDC Inspected. The specifications include processing, buyer and generic specifications that are used for the production of, and purchase of inspected and lot inspected product. Labels are reviewed and approved in compliance with the labeling laws and regulations of FDA which bear inspection marks or reference inspection through advertisement.

In addition, DASS supplies all inspection personnel and inspected facilities with accountable and non-accountable documents, equipment and materials that enable the inspectors to perform their task of inspecting

products and facilities. DASS also provides participants and inspection personnel with updates to the manuals, information on the service and identity of participants in the program.

# CALENDAR

**HACCP Workshops for Industry**

The Industry HACCP course is an intense three-day course that covers all aspects of the HACCP concept as it relates to seafood harvesting, processing, transporting, distributing and retailing.

**March**

23-25 New Bedford, MA  
23-25 Seattle, WA

**April**

13-15 Miami, FL  
27-29 Honolulu, HI

**May**

11-13 Gloucester, MA  
18-20 San Francisco, CA  
18-20 Brownsville, TX (Spanish)

**June**

8-10 Seattle, WA  
TBA Anchorage, AK  
22-24 Ft. Lauderdale, FL

**Upcoming Trade Shows**

Look for the USDC Seafood Inspection booth at the following show(s):

**Marine Hotel Association Show**

Vancouver, BC  
April 18-20, 2004

**European Seafood Expo**

Brussels  
May 6-8, 2004

**American School Foodservice Association**

Indianapolis, IN  
July 25-28, 2004

**Louisiana Foodservice Expo**

New Orleans, LA  
July 31-August 2, 2004

**West Coast Seafood Show**

Long Beach, CA  
October 31-November 2, 2004



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**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Company:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Address:** \_\_\_\_\_

**City:** \_\_\_\_\_

**State:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Zip Code:** \_\_\_\_\_